

## Combining Marriage, Family, and Career

In the 2000s everything is changing even more rapidly than in past decades. What was true ten years ago no longer applies. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the field of the superwoman—the woman who has chosen to combine marriage, family and a career. Nontraditional solutions have been found in flex time, part-time work, husbands not working outside the home, and even the reemergence of nannies.

By the same token senior female managers may cancel meetings to take their children to medical appointments and attend important school functions. Yes, the working world has become more accepting of working mothers. Conversely, the sisterhood that existed among working women in a male-dominated world is in sharp decline.

Nevertheless, women are subject to the same fundamental pressure that has always existed—not enough time. They are committed to providing support to children and husbands; they often are not their own masters. So, as well as needing dedication, hard work, self denial, and boundless strength, women also sometimes need to be able to put the interests of their families above their own.

The three main hubs around which many women's lives revolve are family, husband, and career, although the emphasis of the three parts varies with time and from woman to woman. Think about the professional women you know. How many make an unqualified success of all three elements? A career woman may work too hard and possibly neglect her family (or at least feel she has neglected them!). Conversely, a career woman may work too little and lose her job or be “laterally displaced” to a new, less arduous (and at the same time less prestigious ) position, which results, in turn, on pressures on other elements of her life.

So why do so many women opt for the difficult juggling act of keeping all parts of their lives in equilibrium? Often they think they have no choice; they opt out for security, both financial and intellectual. No woman can rely on being supported by a man for the rest of her life at any age. As life goes on, financial pressures mount, moving through cribs and braces to cars and college. For many women the initial euphoria of working for self-fulfillment, for “making a difference,” and for intellectual development and fame becomes buried in the need for paying the bills and preparing for retirement.

Children are the great unknown. One chooses a husband, and if the choice is wrong, one can start again. Jobs (professional or not) come and go. This is not true with a child. A child arrives, helpless and demanding, and suddenly you have a life-long commitment to a new person in your life. This is both the joy and the curse of children. They are nonrefundable, come without instructions, and need you—yes, you—their mother. They get sick when their father is out of town and you are entertaining foreigners or moving to a new house. They get really sick when you have a funding deadline or when you have an important commitment to their father or one of their siblings.

I do not think there are any easy answers. There is no “right time” to have your children, no “right time” to get married, no “right time” to work exclusively on your career. You can make nontraditional choices; single-parent families are not uncommon, and the workplace is more forgiving of the needs of mothers. Many professional women choose not to have children. This may have a positive impact on their careers.

On a personal note, I can't imagine life without my children and husband. They have enriched my life and forced me to grow in ways totally outside my sphere of understanding. Even now, with our new “empty nest” our children continue to provide a never-ending challenge. The complex nature of human interactions is vastly more intricate than the relatively simple and controllable events in a laboratory. I made my decisions over twenty five years ago, and have never regretted them.

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## Getting a Summer Job

Job experience in a technical field is an important part of your education and can help you decide where your interests lie. Your success in getting a summer job will be directly related to how you go about it.

Before you even go out the front door, you should have a resume (see the article on resumes). The actual preparation of a resume is covered in a separate chapter. Very briefly, you should include your work experience, your courses in school, your extracurricular activities and hobbies, and your career objectives. Armed with a resume you can start your job hunt.

Everyone you know is a potential source of employment. They may not be in a position to hire you but may know of someone who is, so tell everybody you know that you want a job. If people do not know your qualifications, experience, and goals in life, tell them! It is perfectly all right to say something like the following: "I am a junior in high school with a B+ average. I have received A's in chemistry and math, and I am taking calculus and advanced chemistry next year. When I start college, I am going to major in electrical engineering." Remember that if you do not tell people about yourself, no one else will do it for you.

### The best place to start

The best place to start looking for the kind of summer job you want is in the organizations that employ people who are doing what you want to do. If you want to be a doctor, contact doctors' offices and medical labs; if you want to be an architect, contact the architectural firms in your city or town. Any experience or knowledge you can gain about the career you want to enter will be helpful to you.

The term "any experience" brings up the question: "What if they offer me a job as a secretary or clerk?" Unless you have a better job offer, take it, but make sure that everyone you work with knows that your goal in life is to be an engineer, not a secretary. Ask questions about the technical work of the organization, tell people that you want to learn about what the organization does, and volunteer to help with drafting, experiments, and all the other projects that the engineers and scientists are doing. Ask them about their work, ask from what universities they graduated, and what courses you should be taking in high school. People love to talk about themselves and their jobs, so they will be glad to answer your questions.

### If you can't find a job

You may not be fortunate enough to find a paid summer job in the field that interests you. If this happens, do not give up and spend the summer in your back yard. Take courses, do volunteer work, spend time at the library; do whatever you can to gain experience in the working world or to improve your knowledge of scientific, engineering, and other nontraditional disciplines. Although you may not receive a paycheck, you will get experience and knowledge that may give you an edge in obtaining a job later.

### Where do you go to find out about job openings?

The information given below is by no means all-inclusive. These addresses and phone numbers are just a start and do not include any small, private companies, so do not limit your job search just to these organizations.

### Federal government employment information is available from

Federal Job Information Center (all NM counties except Dona Ana (505) 766-5583 and Otero)  
421 Gold Ave. SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

### Federal Job Information Center

(Dona Ana and Property Trust Building, Suite N302 Otero counties)  
2211 E. Missouri Ave.  
El Paso, TX 79903  
(915) 543-7425

### State government employment information is available from

NM State Personnel Board  
810 W. San Mateo Rd.  
Santa Fe, NM 87505  
(505) 827-8190

### Private employment information is available from

NM Employment Security Department  
(ask for their listing in the Research and Statistics Section entitled "Large Employers;" P.O. Box 1938, Albuquerque, NM 87103 in NM by County) (505) 842-3105.

Look in the yellow pages of your local phone directory under energy, scientists, doctors, lawyers, architects, engineers, etc., for smaller employers.

### When do you start looking for a summer job?

"Now" is the answer. Once again, tell everyone you know (teachers, parents, friends, and relatives) that you want a job and tell them what kind of job you want. Contact the places where you wish to work and find out when they start accepting applications for summer employment. The federal government, for example, starts their summer employment program in November to fill vacancies for the following summer. Be persistent and follow up on your employment leads.

### Don't get discouraged

Almost no one gets a job at the first place they apply. Most people have held jobs that were not exactly what they wanted. However, they learned all they could and worked hard, and the experience they gained helped them later to get a job they really wanted.

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